



Executive Council  
of Australian Jewry Inc.

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**13 December 2010**

**Charles Zentai**

The President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Dr Danny Lamm, today called on the Federal Government to defend the decision last year of the Minister for Home Affairs to extradite Charles Zentai to Hungary to stand trial for the murder of Peter Balasz in 1944 by appealing against the Federal Court's ruling on July 2 which overturned that decision.

"Very serious matters of public interest are at stake" Dr Lamm stated. "For example, the Federal Court found that the war crime of which Zentai is accused was not known to the law of Hungary in 1944 and is therefore not a "qualifying extradition offence" under Australia's extradition laws. Yet war crimes have been a part of customary international law, binding on all nations, for more than a century. Many of these crimes were codified in the Hague Regulations in 1907. If the Federal Court's decision was right, then the Japanese war criminals who were convicted, hanged and gaoled by Australian war crimes tribunals under Australia's War Crimes Act after 1945 were wrongfully treated and Australia acted illegally. The Australian Government cannot allow such a finding to go unchallenged and must set the legal and historical record straight."

Dr Lamm added: "It might seem hard to imagine that a grey-haired old man could have committed unspeakable crimes in his youth, unrelated to any military operations. Australians are fortunate in never having known the daily horror of living under a totalitarian government. The very idea of killing a

teenage boy because of his religious or ethnic background is well beyond the range of experiences of most of us.

But there is something we can understand. The surviving relatives of Peter Balazs are not looking for vengeance. They want the whole truth about what happened to him, a matter of elementary justice, no matter how long it takes. The loved ones of any victim of an alleged murder would demand no less.”

Enquiries:

**Peter Wertheim AM | Executive Director**  
**phone: 02 8353 8500 | m: 0408 160 904 | fax 02 9361 5888**  
**e: [pwertheim@ecaj.org.au](mailto:pwertheim@ecaj.org.au) | [www.ecaj.org.au](http://www.ecaj.org.au)**